

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 230924 TOSEC 270292

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FOLLOWING REPEAT DAMASCUS 6286 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 17 SEP 76.

QTE: S E C R E T DAMASCUS 6286

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FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH KHADDAM SEPTEMBER 17

REF: (A) STATE 225449, (B) DAMASCUS 6154

1. SUMMARY: KHADDAM SUGGESTS SPECIFIC POINTS USG MIGHT MAKE IN PUBLIC STATEMENT AT TIME OF SARKIS' INAUGURATION. ALSO ASKS WE INTERVENE WITH SAUDI, KUWAITI AND GULF LEADERS TO COUNSEL THEM AGAINST CONTINUING TO HELP JUMBLATT AND EXTREMIST PALESTINIANS AND TO URGE THEM TO RESTORE THEIR AID TO SYRIA. END SUMMARY

2. IN OUR SEPT 17 MEETING, KHADDAM SAID HE HAD ASKED TO SEE ME TO FOLLOW-UP MY SEPT 14 TALK WITH ASAD CONCERNING A POSSIBLE USG STATE-SECRET

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MENT AROUND THE TIME OF SARKIS' INAUGURATION.

SYRIA HOPED IF WE DO MAKE SUCH A STATEMENT, IN ADDITION TO EXPRESSING OUR KNOWN SUPPORT FOR LEBANESE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND COHESION AS WELL AS OUR OPPOSITION TO PARTITION, THAT WE WOULD STRESS TWO FURTHER POINTS:

A. APPEAL TO ALL CONCERNED TO SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN THE AUTHORITY OF PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS AS THE LEGITIMATE LEADER OF LEBANON AND

B. DRAW ATTENTION TO THE DANGERS CAUSED BY PERPETUATION OF THE CURRENT CRISIS IN LEBANON TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY.

SAID I WOULD IMMEDIATELY REPORT SYRIA'S REQUEST TO YOU.

3. SOVIET ROLE IN LEBANON AND PRESSURES ON SYRIA:

AFTER DISCUSSION OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON (SEPTTEL), KHADDAM SAID IT WAS NOTEWORTHY THAT BOTH THE SOVIETS AND AMERICA'S ARAB FRIENDS ARE GIVING MILITARY AND AND POLITICAL SUPPORT TO THE SAME PARTIES IN LEBANON. AT THE SAME TIME, THE SOVIETS HAD EXTENDED THEIR PRESSURES ON SYRIA BEYOND JUST THE POLITICAL SPHERE TO ECONOMIC AND MILITARY MATTERS. THERE WERE A NUMBER OF CONTRACTS WHOSE IMPLEMENTATION MOSCOW HAS DELAYED FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS.

4. SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GULF STATES, KHADDAM CONTINUED, ARE CONTRIBUTING CONSIDERABLE FINANCIAL AID TO JUMBLATT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CONTINUING TO SUSPEND THEIR AID TO SYRIA. HE HAD TWO QUESTIONS IN THIS REGARD. WAS USG PRESSURING SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GULF STATES NOT RPT NOT TO ASSIST SYRIA? SECONDLY, WOULD THE USG CONSIDER CONTACTING THOSE GOVERNMENTS TO DRAW THEIR ATTENTION TO THE DANGERS WHICH CONTINUATION OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS CONSTITUTED FOR THEM AND TO REQUEST RENEWAL OF THEIR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO SYRIA? LEBANESE CRISIS WAS COSTING SYRIA HEAVILY IN ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND MILITARY TERMS BUT CONTINUATION OF THE WAR AT ITS PRESENT LEVEL AND INTENSITY WILL LEAD TO A SITUATION IN WHICH THE INTERESTS OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA OIL STATES WILL BE THE FIRST TO BE AFFECTED. THE RECENT INTERNAL
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KUWAITI DIFFICULTIES ARE AN EXCELLENT ILLUSTRATION OF THIS FACT.

5. REPLIED I WOULD RELAY BOTH OF HIS QUESTIONS TO WASHINGTON AND GET AN OFFICIAL USG REACTION FOR HIM. ADDED WHILE I WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS, I BELIEVED I COULD CATEGORICALLY ASSURE THE MINISTER THAT WE WERE NOT PRESSURING THE SAUDIS AND THE GULF LEADERSHIPS TO WITHHOLD

ASSISTANCE FROM SYRIA. ASKED IF SYRIA HAD KEPT THE SAUDI AND GULF LEADERSHIPS BRIEFED FULLY ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF SOVIET PRESSURES, KHADDAM SAID DAMASCUS HAD DONE SO. I COMMENTED THAT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, IT SEEMED TO ME PENINSULA LEADERS HAD MANEUVERED OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS TO AVOID GETTING CAUGHT UP IN THE CAIRO-DAMASCUS RIVALRY AND TO ASSIST IN SYRO-EGYPTIAN RECONCILIATION. THEY WOULD BE TAKEN BACK BY KHADDAM'S SUGGESTION THEY WERE THEREBY WORKING IN SUPPORT OF SOVIET POLICY ALTHOUGH I UNDERSTOOD HIS POINT THAT WHATEVER PENINSULA INTENTIONS MIGHT BE, A POLICY OF HELPING EXTERMIST PALESTINIANS AND EVEN JUMBLATT, WHILE WITHHOLDING HELP TO SYRIA, MIGHT SEEM TO AMOUNT TO THE SAME THING.

6. KHADDAM SAID HE WISHED NO MISUNDERSTANDING. HE WAS NOT ASKING US TO INTERVENE WITH PENINSULA LEADERS TO SEEK A CUT IN AID TO THE PALESTINIANS BUT ONLY TO THE EXTREMISTS AMONG THEM AND TO JUMBLATT. SYRIA DID NOT WISH TO EMBARRASS THE OIL STATE LEADERSHIPS BUT COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THEY, WHO WOULD BE THE FIRST TO PAY THE PRICE SHOULD JUMBLATT SUCCEED, SHOULD CONTINUE TO HELP HIM. THE SAUDI, KUWAITI, AND GULF LEADERS EXPECT TO PROFIT FROM THE POLICY SYRIA HAS BEEN FOLLOWING IN LEBANON IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEMSELVES. NATURALLY, KHADDAM CONTINUED, SYRIA WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW POLICIES BASED ON ITS PERCEPTIONS OF SYRIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS. BUT "THE TIME MIGHT COME WHEN WE WILL WONDER IF IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO CONTINUE TO FACE ALL THE PRESSURES THAT HAVE BEEN FOCUSED ON US FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. WE MIGHT BECOME UNABLE TO BEAR THE CONTINUED PRESSURE AND CHANGE OUR POLICY. THE FIRST EFFECT OF ANY SUCH CHANGE IN OUR POLICY WOULD BE FELT IN THE GULF."

7. I COMMENTED THAT KHADDAM WAS DESCRIBING A SITUATION OF
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ENHANCED PRESSURE ON SYRIA WHEN, TO THE OUTSIDE OBSERVER, IT APPEARED THAT THERE HAD ACTUALLY BEEN A DROP IN CRITICISM OF SYRIA'S LEBANESE ROLE. NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THE MORE BALANCED PRAVDA SEPT 8 STATEMENT. KHADDAM AGREED THAT AS FAR AS SOVIET AND PALESTINIAN PUBLIC CRITICISMS WERE CONCERNED, THE PRESSURE ON DAMASCUS HAD DECREASED BUT THE "MATERIAL PRESSURE" ON SYRIA HAD GROWN. ONLY THE SYRIAN LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN AWARE OF THIS AND IT DOES NOT WISH TO PUBLICIZE THE EXTENT OF THIS INCREASING PRESSURE.

8. COMMENT: KHADDAM HAS ANSWERED BOTH YOUR QUESTIONS-- ABOUT OUR POSSIBLE PUBLIC STATEMENT AND COURSE WE MIGHT PURSUE IN OUR GENERAL DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES (STATE 225449). FONMIN'S PITCH FOR USG ASSISTANCE IN SOLICITING AID FOR SYRIA FROM THE PENINSULA STATES IS A DRAMATIC REVERSAL ON

THE FONMIN'S PART WHOSE BASIC ATTITUDE HAS LONG BEEN THAT INTER-
ARAB RELATIONS ARE MATTER FOR ARABS ALONE TO DEAL WITH.
THE WAY HE RAISED THE ISSUE OF OUR INTERVENING
WITH THE SAUDI, KUWAITI AND GULF LEADERS WAS CON-
VOLUTED, IN CONTRAST TO HIS SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR
ELEMENTS WE MIGHT INCLUDE IN ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT TO BE
MADE AT THE FIME OF SARKIS' INAUGURATION. BUT IT
NONETHELESS DEMONSTRATES SYRIAN INTEREST IN "COOPERATING"
WITH THE U.S. IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS. HOW WE RESPOND TO
HIS REQUEST COULD INFLUENCE FUTURE SYRIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS
WORKING WITH US IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS.
MURPHY
UNQTE: ROBINSON

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